



Why Would My Application Be Denied? Common Pitfalls to Avoid

The Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) application process can be daunting; there are many reasons why submitted applications may not be awarded. The ESA staff has compiled a list of the most common reasons ESA applications are rejected so that parents can make an informed decision and avoid common pitfalls throughout the process.

100 Day Requirement Not Met- Pursuant to ARS § 15-2401, a student must have been enrolled in an Arizona *public school* for the *first 100 days* of the *previous school year as a full time student*. In order to qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account our staff verifies enrollment data before approving any ESA application.

What are possible reasons for missing the 100 day requirement?

- Did your child go to two or more schools last year? If so, did he/she have an enrollment gap?
- Was your child removed from a public school to home school or attend private school?
- Did your child attend public school in the State of Arizona last year?
- Was your child placed by a public school district to receive services from a private school?

Submitted Documents Other Than IEP/MET/SV Form or 504 to prove disability- In order to qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account an applicant must submit a current IEP, MET, 504 form, School Verification form or have received a qualifying scholarship from a School Tuition Organization (STO). *Determinations made regarding a student's disability from other sources are not accepted and should not be included in submitted applications.*

No Submitted Documentation- Pursuant to ARS § 15-2401, an applicant must submit a *current* IEP, MET, 504 plan or School Verification form from a *public school* In order to qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account.

Out of date IEP/MET/504- Pursuant to statute, an applicant must submit a *current* IEP, MET, 504 plan, School Verification form or have received a qualifying scholarship from a School Tuition Organization (STO).

- A current IEP must be dated within one year of the determination date.
- A current MET must be dated within three years of the determination date.
- A current 504 must be dated within one year of the determination date.

Missing pages of IEP/Met- To qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account an applicant must submit a *complete and current* IEP, MET, School Verification form or have received a qualifying scholarship from a Student Tuition Organization (STO).

- A complete IEP must be dated within one year of the determination date and include the eligibility determination (typically shown in the first three pages).
- A current MET must be dated within three years of the determination date and have no missing pages.

Non-Qualifying Student- In order to qualify for the Empowerment Scholarship Account program the applying student must be identified by a school district as a child with a disability as defined in section 15-761 under the Arizona Revised Statutes, or who is eligible to receive services from a school district under A.R.S. § 15-763. Students without a verifiable disability do not qualify for an ESA.

Out of State Student- Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2401, an applicant must be a *resident of the State of Arizona* and must have attended an Arizona public school for 100 days in the previous year in order to qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account.

Additional Student Tuition Organization (STO) Eligibility Requirements

ESA awards may be dispensed to two types of qualifying students: a student attended an Arizona public school the previous year or; a student who attended private school through an STO program. STO students and public school students are evaluated similarly, but verified differently. The following are the most common reasons why STO students are not eligible for the ESA scholarship.

Non-Qualifying STO- Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2401, a student applying under an STO scholarship must have received that scholarship pursuant to A.R.S. § 43-1505 for *displaced and disabled students*. No other STO scholarships will be accepted.

Non-District IEP determination- Pursuant to ARS § 15-2401, the state must receive a current eligibility determination (IEP/MET or other) proving disability of a pupil from a *public district school* in order for a student to qualify for an Empowerment Scholarship Account.

How do I obtain a district determination?

- Some private schools collaborate with public school districts to evaluate special education students.
- Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-766 (B) district schools are required to evaluate and re-evaluate students on an annual basis within sixty days of a parental request.
- Contract privately with a school district using ESA or personal funds.

School Verification Forms & STOs- Pursuant to statute, a School Verification Form must be used as proof of a disability only when it can be verified by a *school district*. An STO application may not use a School Verification Form as the sole means of providing proof of disability.